

Summer 2008



FUNCTIONAL LITERACY MINISTRY OF HAITI

Esperi D'Esperans

Spirit of Hope

Dare to Dream: 25 Years of Helping Haiti

By Dr. Leon Pamphile
Executive Director of Functional Literacy Ministry of Haiti

In the early 1980s, I achieved one of the fondest dreams of my life: I earned a doctoral degree from the University of Pittsburgh. It seemed then that I should have been satisfied, but I was not. I was still haunted by the mountainous problems I left behind in Haiti and my commitment to making a difference in my homeland.

Returning to Haiti was virtually impossible because I was concerned for the welfare of my immediate family here. Then a dream came to me: I could have a real presence in Haiti through a program aimed at making life better for Haitians. After sharing the idea with my wife Rozelle and a truly angelic figure—Martha Domske—I became convinced that my dream could become a reality. With this dream, Functional Literacy Ministry of Haiti was born 25 years ago.

What a wonderful ride it has been! What a tremendous blessing to watch the budding and blossoming of the dream! Our initial 4 literacy centers have grown to 40. More than 5,000 people have acquired reading, writing, and mathematics skills through these centers. A school established in 1989 has provided education to thousands of young people. One of them returned this year as a teacher.

In 2000, the late David Robinson helped to add a medical component to the dream. Since then, teams of doctors, nurses, and other healthcare workers have helped every summer to relieve pain and suffering. David Robinson's effort led to the construction of a community health center to address on a more permanent basis the dire health needs of the people living in the community of Thomassin and surrounding areas.

The dream now includes building a vocational school for the young people of these communities. Too many talents go to waste for lack of opportunities. A lot next to our clinic is awaiting the construction of such a school.

As FLM-Haiti celebrates its 25th anniversary, it is amazing to realize that we have touched more than 3,000 lives since the be-



photo by Sue Rich

Some of the 500 youngsters who attend FLM's school gather for an assembly.



photo by Sue Rich

FLM's new health clinic will provide life-saving care and health education for some 30,000 people living in and near Thomassin.

ginning of this year. These include the 400 patients seen in January and the 800 more this past June. There are 700 youngsters attending our school or our summer camp in addition to the 1,200 students of our 40 literacy centers. Finally, the list includes the nearly 100 people who staff our programs in Haiti. FLM-Haiti is a small organization, but little is much when God is in it.

We want to express our unbounded gratitude to all the keepers of the dream. I have found a wealth of goodwill in America and especially in the Pittsburgh community. Let us continue to work steadfastly so that the dream may be fully realized for the well-being of our brothers and sisters in Haiti.

I walked out of the airport in Port-au-Prince into a world that I could never have imagined. . . In a city of two million people, there are few traffic lights; cars make their way through the intersections just by honking.

If you have a vehicle, you are lucky, but most Haitians walk everywhere they go—and it is not easy terrain. If you are blessed with shoes, then the trek becomes somewhat bearable. Women carry large tubs full of food, bags of grain, and jugs of water on their heads. I wonder how at night they must lie down and deal with chronic pain from carrying out these necessary daily duties. Yet, they do it day after day.

It did not take me long to experience the humble personality of many Haitians and their appreciation for what we were doing. They may be living in poverty worse than any I had ever imagined, yet they smile and continue to pray to God for strength. Prayer appears to be their main resource, not their last resort.

As we travel to Thomassin, the countryside is breathtaking, but many of the homes are just unfinished concrete walls with exposed rebar, dirt floors, and no doors. Electricity is provided only for the few who can pay. If you are affluent enough to own a home with a roof, windows, doors, and electricity, then you guard it with barbed wire or exposed glass to prevent the hungry from scaling the walls.

Each day at sunrise, most people begin with the question, "Will I eat today?" How humbling it is for me to think that in my world I choose not only whether to eat today but how many times.

We finally arrive at the clinic. It isn't finished yet, but we are blessed with a roof that protects us from the sun. There are many sick people already waiting. They seem to know a patience I can only hope to attain someday.

I do not know any Creole, the official language, but along with Mackenson, my interpreter, I begin the long day of triaging more than 100 patients. It doesn't take long to see a trend of illnesses. Due

to contaminated water, lack of food, and the complete lack of medical care, they are plagued with persistent abdominal pain, intestinal worms, malaria, scalp fungus, scabies, impetigo, malnourishment, dehydration, chronic joint and limb pain, and the most common ailment: hypertension.

I am amazed at the hypertension they suffer. My own blood pressure left untreated runs at 155/100, yet I saw a 78-year-old man who survives with 273/140. He runs the risk of stroke at any moment, but his only concern is his knee pain because it interferes with his hard work and prevents him from walking where he needs to go.

In the afternoons, lunch is provided by a gracious group of ladies. We feast on rice, beans, potatoes, and carrots. The waiting sick are invited to eat as well, and for many this is the only meal they will have today.

Our second day at Thomassin is filled with many more children and babies than we saw the first day. Some of the children are the most beautiful I have ever seen. The soft innocence in their eyes and the yearning in their heart for someone to care creates strong emotions in me. It does not take me long to attach myself to Mark, a three-year-old boy accompanied by his mother, Elsie. Dr. Sam Roberts tells me Mark suffers from sickle cell anemia, intestinal worms, scars from scabies, and malnourishment, and he is unable to grow hair because he doesn't have enough protein in his diet.

He looks in my eyes with a quiet desperation and a wondering of what we are



An Ordinary Procedure with a Miraculous Result

In Haiti, the simplest medical procedures can save lives. A desperate mother brought her baby to this year's clinic. When the baby arrived, she was severely dehydrated and on the verge of death. The medical team administered a glucose gel, then gave the girl a saline solution and Pedialyte with a dropper until she recovered. After she was stable, the team treated her for an infection. God truly works miracles through our medical team members.

Above: Sheree Bowley and Ben Roberts provide lifesaving care for the baby suffering from severe dehydration.

going to do. I ask permission from his mother and I cradle him in my arms. It is at this time he lays his little head on my shoulder and trusts me completely. I begin to cry, and understand for the first time the great love that Dr. Roberts and his son Ben have for Haiti and its people. Leon tells me that Mark's father was killed very recently. Again, I cry and cradle Mark.

I have decided to become a child sponsor by sending aid every month for proper nutrition, vitamins, a water filter, clothing, and school funds. I pray to God that, if I achieve nothing else of value in my own life, I *will* make a difference in the lives of Haitians.

Vacation Bible School:

He's Got the Whole World in His Hands

Pastor Molly T. Golando, VBS team leader

Four Americans traveled to Haiti this summer to offer a summer camp for children. The theme this summer was "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands." The American and Haitian members of the team all concluded that an important goal of the camp was met: the children had fun! Additional goals were to present the Gospel to the children with emphasis on Jesus' love for children, and to present basic geography concepts. With a combination of Bible stories, crafts, music, recreation, and geography lessons, the team conveyed the idea that God created children because they are important to

God, and children all over the world are loved by God.

Along with typical Vacation Bible School activities, the children received basic hygiene information, such as how worms enter the body, basic hand-washing techniques and wound care, and the importance of brushing their teeth. The older children stayed for English lessons that seemed particularly fun for the team and the children.

An integral factor in the success of the camp was my translator, Wadson Desir, whose skillful, enthusiastic, and sincere participation lifted up everyone, presenters and children alike.

photo by Sue Robinson



Literacy Center Awards Certificates

Ervin Dyer

It is Sunday evening, and the air is hot and stifling at the church in Bel-Air, a crowded neighborhood in Port-au-Prince. The heat does nothing to wilt the celebration for the hundreds of individuals who participate in the graduation ceremony I am attending at Eglise de Dieu en Christ (the Church of God in Christ). They are graduates of a program run by FLM-Haiti that teaches reading, writing, arithmetic, and—in a nation struggling to build a stable democracy—civic participation.

This year, more than 1,000 proud men and women heard their names called as they walked down the aisle to receive their certificate and Bible or hymnal. The smiles never stopped coming.

At the church, Leon Pamphile encourages the graduates to pursue excellence. Eduard, the keeper of a church in Thomassin, is one of the graduates. He clutches his certificate, proudly showing it to visitors. "It feels good," he says, beaming at his achievement.

photo by Sue Rich



Yes, I would like to help the people of Haiti!

Please send your donation to
Functional Literacy Ministry of Haiti
 1064 Premier St.
 Pittsburgh, PA 15201

Amount of gift: _____

Name _____

Phone _____

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- I would like to be a child sponsor. (pledge of \$20 per month)
- I would like my donation to be marked for the House of David Community Health Center construction.
- Please use my donation wherever it's needed.

The official registration and financial information of Functional Literacy Ministry may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Hypertension Clinic... A Year Later

Joby Joseph, MD

During the 2007 summer medical mission, we established a hypertension clinic. The goal was to ensure continuing care for patients with high blood pressure in the Thomassin area.

Fifty patients were initially enrolled, and their blood pressures were checked on a monthly basis by a trained Haitian health worker. The blood pressure readings, pulse rate, and list of medications for each patient were sent to Dr. Donald Robinson in Hamburg, NY, and me via Internet. We made the necessary changes in the medications depending on the blood pressure readings and communicated back to the local health worker in Haiti. Ann Farquharson, a local missionary, serves as the local coordinator.

Approximately 65 percent of the patients attended the clinic on a monthly basis, and the rest came every other month. Almost all the patients paid a fee of 25 Gourds (about 75 cents). The money collected is applied toward the local health worker's pay.

The original patients came back to see me during the 2008 summer medical mission, and we were able to add an additional 20 to the group. Of the original group, the blood pressure of 25 percent came under control with one medication and 65 percent with two medications. The remaining 10 percent need further intervention.

In order to facilitate continuity of care, we introduced a permanent medical recordkeeping system this year. Each patient has a folder with their medical history, physical examination information, and medication flow sheet. From now on, patients with well-controlled blood pressure will be seen on a quarterly basis, enabling us to add new patients. All the enrolled patients

will be seen twice a year during the winter and summer medical mission visits.

Finally we are making a small but significant impact in tackling one of the rampant and chronic medical conditions of the Haitian population, hypertension. Our sincere thanks to Ann Farquharson and to our hard-working Haitian health worker, Mr. Lissade.



photo by Sue Robinson

Dr. Joby Joseph notes the progress of a hypertension patient.

An Amazing Process

Sue Robinson, mission trip co-leader

What goes on behind the scenes to get ready to take more than 2,000 pounds of supplies to Haiti for a medical and educational mission trip? There are thousands of people involved. Here is a quick glimpse.

This summer 2,100 hygiene kits were distributed to patients at the clinic, to the schoolchildren, the teachers, the translators and pastors in Haiti. The kits contained soap, a toothbrush, a washcloth, band-aids, and an emery board.

Churches and schools sponsored drives for the supplies. Dentists, hotels, and stores made generous donations. The Lions Clubs donated glasses, and schoolchildren brought in their outgrown glasses. We purchased hundreds of reading glasses from Partners in Re-

storing Vision and Improving Lives for a nominal fee.

What about all the medications we distributed? Individuals organized their churches, health clubs, offices, and friends to collect over-the-counter medicines. Pharmacies gave donations. From organizations like MAP International, Brother's Brother, Global Links, and King's Way (formerly King Benevolent Fund), we received donations of medicines and vitamins or were able to purchase them for a vastly reduced price.

Hundreds of pairs of hands, both young and old, assembled hygiene kits and counted out and bagged vitamins and pain relievers for individual distribution. Young people from East Liberty Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh

and East Union United Presbyterian Church in Cheswick, PA, packed medicines and hygiene kits instead of eating supper during a "30-hour famine." "Packing days" were held at Chartiers Cross Roads Presbyterian Church in Washington, PA, and Hamburg Presbyterian Church in Hamburg, NY. Volunteers condensed the supplies and medications by removing all the extra packaging. Then large duffle bags—two per team member—were packed with the airline-imposed 50-pound weight limit. And then it was off to Haiti. In reality, thousands of individuals "went to Haiti" with those bags, in an outreach of love to the Haitian people who are in such desperate need.

FLM-Haiti extends a thank you to everyone who was involved in this amazing process.

Gripped by God's Grace

Sue Robinson and Mary Gregg, mission trip co-leaders

Excitement is growing! The completion of the House of David Community Health Center in Thomassin, Haiti, is in sight. Clearly, God is opening doors for the completion of the health center in early 2009. Here are some of the significant events that have occurred:

February: The Building Goodness Foundation returned to Haiti to complete the nurses' station, install pharmacy counters, and hang several doors. A Haitian building team completed smooth plastering of the inside walls.

March: Building Goodness presented FLM with a \$25,000 matching grant toward the completion of the clinic

June: The Pittsburgh-based organization Global Links agreed to provide a 20-foot sea container of medical and office furniture, scales, blood pressure units, minor surgery instruments, a dental chair, a refractions lens set for eye exams, and up to 100 cases of medical supplies.

We visited a clinic, *Mountain Top Ministries*, established by missionaries Willem and Beth Ellen Charles, to see their pharmacy and to learn how they keep records and organize the work of the clinic. They will offer their expertise and experience as we get the health center up and running.

Our Medical Advisory Board, with representatives from each community surrounding the health center as well as

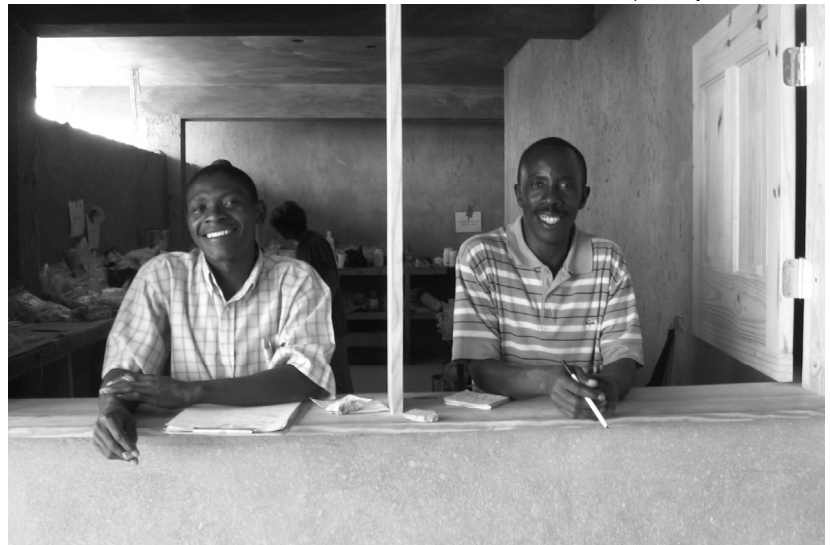


photo by Sue Robinson

Haitian health workers at the House of David Community Health Center's pharmacy

the pastor from Kenscoff, was formed. This group will formulate policies and procedures before the opening of the health center in January.

We visited Dr. André Patrick Jeudy's full-time *Clini Med* clinic in Port-au-Prince. A Haitian, Dr. Jeudy's life was forever changed when he participated in a mission trip to Africa almost 20 years ago. He believes that God has led him to work with us as we establish our health center and begin operations. Dr. Jeudy will work with the newly established Medical Advisory Board to develop operational practices and procedures and staff the health center.

Fall 2008: Building Goodness will make several trips to Haiti to complete the health center.

January 2009: The furnishings and equipment for the clinic are set to arrive in Haiti in late 2008 or early in 2009.

God is on the move! Our challenge is to complete our capital fund raising for the clinic so we can achieve our vision to have the House of David Community Health Center of Thomassin operational by February 2009. We hope that you will support FLM with a special gift to help us reach our \$100,000 Capital Fund Drive goal.

Churches in Action: Bibles for Haiti

FLM-Haiti started out in 1983 as an adult literacy program with a handful of centers in Port-au-Prince. Today, the hundreds of students who participate in our programs learn basic reading and math skills at no cost to themselves except the commitment and dedication to persevere. Graduates of the two-year program receive a diploma and a Creole Bible. The Bibles represent a large financial outlay for FLM-Haiti. Where does the money come from?

As with everything accomplished by FLM-Haiti, the money came from many generous individuals, like a 12-year-old girl in New Jersey who held bake sales in order to raise \$125 for the project. The youth group at Chartiers Cross Roads Presbyterian Church in Washington, PA, donated \$1,000 they raised serving meals at the fairgrounds.

The bulk of the money came from Churches in Action ("CIA"), a group of 16 churches in the suburban Buffalo

area that combine their manpower and resources to do mission work locally and internationally. For the second year in a row, FLM-Haiti's literacy center graduates benefited from the CIA's efforts. Members of each church in the CIA group were given the opportunity to donate \$10 for a Creole Bible. There was an overwhelming response to the project, and CIA was able to send \$7,000 to purchase the Bibles in Haiti!

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Mark Your Calendar: Fall Banquet Set for October 25

FLM-Haiti's fall banquet will be held Saturday, October 25, at 5 p.m. Due to the growing number of attendees, we will meet at Churchill Country Club this year.

Our speaker will be William Markle, MD, clinical associate professor of family medicine at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. Dr. Markle is also the program director of family medicine residency at UPMC-McKeesport. Dr. Markle co-edited *Understanding Global Health* (published by McGraw Hill Medical) and participated in the January mission trip to Haiti.

Banquet tickets cost \$50 each. To purchase tickets, contact FLM-Haiti at 412-784-0342.



Functional Literacy Ministry of Haiti

EDUCATIONAL & MEDICAL MISSIONS

Functional Literacy Ministry of Haiti
1064 Premier Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15201

FLM's Mission

Functional Literacy Ministry of Haiti empowers Haitians through Christ with education, health care, and hope.

Contact Us

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